

E-ZPass discounts coming to Del. 1

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DOVER — Beginning Nov. 16, drivers of two-axle passenger vehicles will get 15 percent discounts for using the electronic E-ZPass system to pay tolls on Del. 1.

The system allows motorists to pay tolls from a pre-arranged account via an electronic tag attached to their windshields.

The system is said to be doing business like gangbusters in New York and other bridge-, tunnel- and tollbooth-intensive states in the Northeast region.

At a news conference, officials predicted that downstate Delaware motorists also would jump at the chance to save a dime or two while using designated lanes to breeze past others lined up to pay tolls.

"I was talking to some people in New York who said they'd rather give up their first-born than lose their E-ZPass tag," said E. Michael Williams, a spokesman for the Delaware Department of Transportation.

Erik Dressler, 42, of St. Georges, works in Wilmington, and his daily trips are not subject to tolls. But his employer, Mitchell Associates, is an E-ZPass subscriber, and Dressler has had occasion to use the system as far north as Long Island, N.Y., and as far south as Reston, Va.

"It's a good thing," he said. "It will be an enticement for people to use (Del. 1) and it's a good thing for DelDOT. You can't drive 60 miles an hour, but the traffic does move a long quickly. There's nobody there collecting pennies."

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Brett Taylor, administrator of the state's Transportation Trust Fund, said E-ZPass had cut sharply into congestion

FYI

E-ZPass applications can be obtained by calling (888) 288-6865. A minimum prepaid balance of \$25 is required, along with a \$10 deposit for each E-ZPass tag. Payments may be made by credit card, personal check or cash.

at the Newark toll plaza since it was implemented on Interstate 95 in November.

It was implemented for toll booths along Del. 1 in April, and discounts were offered as an incentive to get larger, mostly commercial vehicles off crumbling and congested U.S. 13. It offered nothing beyond convenience for the average passenger-car driver, however.

When complete, the newly constructed north end of Del. 1 will encompass 40.7 miles. With the opening of the new Biddles Corner toll plaza next month, a trip across the entire span will cost \$1.70 for E-ZPass customers. Cash customers will pay \$2.

The technology of the collection system, administered by Chase Manhattan Bank, can even detect when two or more people are riding in a single vehicle. In such cases, E-ZPass will increase the discount from 15 percent to 50 percent.

As part of the new structure, the discount for five-axle vehicles, which account for the large majority of 18-wheelers, will be increased from 37½ percent to 50 percent.

The technology also is capable of registering prorated tolls for two-axle vehicles. For instance, the regular toll of \$1 for a trip between Biddle's Corner and the north Smyrna exit will drop to 43 cents — reflecting a 50 percent rebate plus the 15 percent E-ZPass discount — if the payer leaves Del. 1 at Boyds Corner.

According to Taylor, two-axle vehicles account for 93.1 percent of Del. 1 traffic. The new discounts

are projected to initially cut \$319,517 a year from Del. 1 toll collections that totaled \$9.6 million in the fiscal year that ended June 30. But given the historical annual traffic growth rate of 2 percent and the new incentive, the break-even point should be reclaimed within a year or two.

The discounts will not alter the retirement of bonds used to finance the \$1.2 million Del. 1 construction project. Repayment of the bonds is scheduled for completion in 2025.

Toll rates

- The new tolls for two- and six-axle vehicles on Del. 1 take effect Nov. 16.

Two-axle vehicles

Between		Cash	E-ZPass
Biddles	Boyds	\$1.00	\$0.43
	S. Smyrna	1.25	1.06
	Denneys	1.50	1.28
	Dover	2.00	1.70
Boyds	S. Smyrna	\$0.75	\$0.64
	Denneys	1.00	0.85
	Dover	1.50	1.28
S. Smyrna	Denneys	\$0.50	\$0.21
	Dover	1.00	0.64
Denneys	Dover	\$1.00	\$0.43

Six-axle vehicles

Between		Cash	E-ZPass
Biddles	Boyds	\$5.00	\$1.25
	S. Smyrna	6.25	3.13
	Denneys	7.50	3.75
	Dover	10.00	5.00
Boyds	S. Smyrna	\$3.75	\$1.88
	Denneys	5.00	2.50
	Dover	7.50	3.75
S. Smyrna	Denneys	\$2.50	\$0.63
	Dover	5.00	1.88
Denneys	Dover	\$5.00	\$1.25

Source: DelDOT

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